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ABSTRACT

The role of business in facilitating educational change is examined in this document, with attention to developing a coalition of business and community leaders for school reform. The first section outlines 12 steps for achieving effective change, followed by a discussion of specific complications, such as a diverse population, need for a dynamic system, and need for teaching different skills and values. Seven ineffective and 12 effective strategies are highlighted next. Finally, five principles for restructuring are presented, which include a focus on student learning improvement, equity and high standards, active engagement of students, systemic change, and coherent policies across the system. In a brief concluding summary it is recommended that individual schools be held accountable for performance and that educators should provide clear definitions of educational objectives and processes for change in order to obtain the funding they need. (LMI)

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WHAT BUSINESS

can do to achieve

Educational Change IN a Community

REMARKS AT THE AUGUST 25, 1990, MEETING OF THE ST. LOUIS REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP BY FRANK HOSKINS, CHAIRMAN, EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

INTRODUCTION BY EDWARD E. WHITACRE JR., CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SOUTHWESTERN BELL CORPORATION

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My business experience has taught me that well-chosen expectations are crucial to the success of any venture. The right goals can energize the people involved in a project. The wrong ones can leave them foundering and ineffective.

That's true not only in the business world, of course, but in any effort to change the status quo. And it's especially important when we turn our attention to the matter of education reform. If we want to improve the way schools educate our children, we must begin with a clear understanding of what we expect students to be able to do as a result of changes in the system of education.

This is precisely why Southwestern Bell Corporation and Southwestern Bell Foundation support the work of Dr. Frank Newman and the Education Commission of the States, Dr. Theodore Sizer and school redesign (Re:Learning), and Dr. John Goodlad and changes in how teachers are prepared for teaching. Their goal is compelling: to improve student learning by changing the way schools and school systems operate, and to change the role of teachers within schools.

It's a sensible approach, because it takes us beyond the point of helping individual students or schools. By focusing on strategic change, we can effectively increase the chance that we can produce widespread and lasting results. We believe that's a goal worth pursuing in educational change. We recognize that corporations will play a vital role in bringing it about.

We can help schools do a better job of educating our children — not just with money, but with our leadership, too. It's up to us to cultivate powerful coalitions for change within our communities. It's up to us to ensure that the discussion remains focused on strategic school change.

This reprint of Dr. Newman's remarks to the St. Louis Regional Educational Partnership is offered in the spirit of moving the discussion forward. I find his perspective on education reform both logical and persuasive. I hope you do, too.

Edward E. Whitacre Jr.

Edward E. Whitacre Jr.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

Southwestern Bell Corporation

WHAT BUSINESS *can do to achieve* Educational Change IN a Community

By Frank Newman

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The role of business leaders in helping to change education is crucial. But knowing what to do, how to do it, and what not to do is essential. Business is needed as a force for change, a force that can join those state policy leaders and those educational leaders who are already out there trying to bring about a transformation of our schools.

The best way to achieve change is through coalitions

The main task is asking the hard questions and insisting on needed changes. The best way to do this is to create a coalition of powerful business and community leaders willing to devote the time to learn about school reform and to press for action. Such coalitions have a second critical function beyond being a force for change — they help provide continuity for the transformation effort over time, as political and educational leaders change.

Improved student learning is the goal

What sort of change is needed in the schools? Most important, there is a need to increase the abilities of school graduates dramatically. This means more than memorizing additional facts; it requires, rather, understanding what those facts mean, learning to think clearly, learning to write an effective paper and a clearly reasoned letter. But it also means learning to solve problems, to take risks, to be creative, to be responsible, and to understand the nature of an international world.

For this transformation to take place both in how much and in what students learn, schools must change. Teachers must learn how to engage students in an active learning experience. Teachers and administrators must begin to put to use the vast array of information on new ways to teach and to run schools, information now largely ignored. Teachers must be more involved in reshaping how their schools operate. Schools must focus more on output measures, e.g., student learning, versus input measures such as the number of teachers and administrators or teacher pay. States and school systems must develop new policies that hold schools accountable for student learning.

Twelve effective steps to achieve change

What specifically can such a business/community coalition do? Keep in mind these things: that every system of schooling is different; that the process of change is ongoing; and that a continuing evolution is needed, not just a one-time change. With these things in mind, here is a list of steps that have proved effective:

1. Build a coalition of business, community and political leaders.
2. Help the state develop a vision of desired student outcomes and a vision of how a school system should operate.
3. Encourage the development of new forms of assessment to measure what students really need to learn.
4. Gain broad public and political support for continuing reform.
5. Encourage flexibility so that schools can experiment.
6. Urge the state to select a set of pilot schools to serve as models.
7. Help the state develop a system of accountability with rewards and sanctions to ensure that schools focus on achieving the student outcomes desired.
8. Develop other policy options that support and encourage schools to take risks and to adopt successful models that have worked elsewhere.
9. Call for the restructuring of both the state department of education and school district administrations so that they set goals and support schools rather than depending primarily on regulation and control.
10. Give every child a chance to learn by developing programs for early-childhood education, mentoring and parental involvement.
11. Press for retraining of teachers and administrators to focus on real learning.
12. Work with the universities to restructure teacher education so that new entrants to the teaching profession are well-prepared change agents.

There are three significant complications that make school transformation difficult.

1. **The problem is dynamic, not static.** The United States cannot cling to a golden view of education that has long since outlived its usefulness. Society is changing at a rapid rate. The problem is not that our schools have failed; it is that society is changing outside the schools. There is no evidence that the end of this rapid change is in sight. Even if a school system could be designed that is ideal for the 1990s, by the next decade it would be obsolete again.

   In the current world, American schools compete with those in other countries. The question used to be whether Missouri schools were as good as Illinois schools. The issue now is whether they are as good at math as Korean schools and as good as British schools at teaching history. In other words, American schools are now competing in an international environment. While the United States is struggling to upgrade its schools, every other major country in the world is going through the same process.

We need an educational system that is self-changing

   So even if a state could create the ideal system of education today, it wouldn't be adequate tomorrow. What is needed is a dynamic system, a system that is self-examining and self-changing.

2. **We have a diverse population, and it is getting more so.** Often this is seen in racial terms; but there are other dimensions of diversity that tend to be overlooked, e.g., the diversity of families. Statistics say the easiest child to educate is one from a two-parent family in which both parents are educated, and in which they have a reasonable amount of resources, they value education, they believe the child is going to succeed and they are prepared to intervene in the child's life by encouraging homework, reading to the child and telling the child school is important.

   More and more frequently, children grow up in a single-parent family, often with a parent who is poor and ill-educated, who may not value

education, who may not have the links to life, who may not expect success, and who does not transmit an expectation of success to the child. Differences in families are powerful — far more powerful than questions of race.

Also, children learn in different ways; there is a diversity in learning styles. Some learn well only when they can do something physically and see the results. Others must have a very clear, pragmatic vision in front of them as to what the information is for. Some learn well in an abstract mode. These differences tend to be ignored by the current system of schooling. **The current system of schooling assumes that the right way to learn is listening to someone talk. As it turns out, this is not the best learning mode for most children.**

Schools need to adapt to the child

The result is a system that expects that the child should adapt to the school, not the school to the child. As such, it has been as much a sorting system as an educating system. Students come in, march along, and at some point many fall out. Some stop paying attention in the third grade. Some drop out at the end of high school. Some drop out at the end of one year of college.

In the past, it all worked out because there was a match between how well educated people were and the needs of society. The resulting sorting seemed fair because everybody at least had a chance. The American dream was not that everyone would succeed, but that everyone would get a chance. Enough people have succeeded in American education so that it is viewed as the most egalitarian system in the world. Up until now, its successes and failures have been accepted.

We must believe this: Every child can learn

Now this country must operate on a fundamentally different assumption — namely, that every child can learn. This is not yet a widely shared belief. Within inner cities, about half the teachers, parents and administrators do not believe that the average child can learn. That sounds like a terrible statement, but it's true. Many do not believe that the average student can learn at a high enough level, for example, to go on to college.

Yet there is overwhelming evidence that almost all children (save a small percentage who are permanently and intellectually damaged at birth) can learn.

If this nation is going to continue to be successful, it must assume that all children can learn. That assumption will require fundamental changes in how schools view their responsibilities.

- **Students need to learn more things, but also different things.** The 1990s require different kinds of skills, not just more knowledge. Students need to know more mathematics, but they also need to know how to reason in mathematical terms. They need to know more geography, but they also need to understand different cultures and to master a second language.

  Students need the ability to reason, to think in abstract terms, to be able to connect two thoughts, and to connect abstract thought to pragmatic tasks. They need the ability to be creative. Schools have never asked students to learn to be creative before. Now this country must make its living by its wits, staying ahead by being at the cutting edge, not by raw productive power.

Students need to be empowered as participants in learning

  Students need to develop a sense of responsibility, including a sense of civic responsibility. They need to be empowered as participants in the learning process, not only because they will learn much more, but because they need training to become empowered adults.

  So it is not just that the system has to become better at teaching knowledge. It must teach skills and values that have not previously been on the agenda. The system must teach those students who have in the past fallen through the cracks. Saying "Well, we gave them a chance" is no longer good enough.

  It is clear that, as difficult as all these things are, transformation of education can happen — must happen. It is being done in some states; it can be done everywhere.

What does not work in educational change

Seven actions that don't work

Before turning to what works, it will help to be clear about what doesn't:

1. **More money alone.** Money is important, but money is not the most important issue. The reallocation of resources is central. The United States spends more money per student than any other country in the world by a significant margin. The issue is how the United States can spend the $200 billion it's spending on elementary and secondary education to produce better learning. Business funding is important as leverage to make change occur, but the worst thing would be to stand around and say "We need massive infusions of money, or it won't work." Money isn't the most important issue.

2. **Turning around a given school but not the school system.** Education is like any other bureaucracy. Schools exist in a system. Unless the entire system is turned around, over time it will eat away at even the most skillfully reformed school. The "system" is everything from the school on up through the district and the state legislature. In case after case, successful schools have given up and returned to mediocrity after years of confronting the system.

   For example, there is a West Coast school in which a new principal came in to find students graduating from the sixth grade with an average of fourth-grade skills. The principal spent her first year talking with the teachers about change. They all agreed to come back on their own time two weeks early to put a new plan into effect. They devoted the first two hours of every day to the basics. They took all the specialists, the Title One specialist and the specialist for the handicapped, put them in the classroom, and had them continue to serve as specialists by coaching the other teachers in dealing with handicapped children.

The net effect of these and other changes was that after about two and a half or three years, almost every student was graduating at the sixth-grade level. They had gone from the bottom of the barrel in the school district to well above the middle.

And what happened? The same thing that happens all across the country: The school district began to chip away. Administrators began to show up and say, "Wait a minute, you're spending the first two hours on basics? The rule says you must spend 20 minutes on this subject and 20 minutes on that subject. I understand you have specialists for the handicapped in the classroom. Oh, it may work, but you lose that position if you do it that way." And on it went. Finally, after five years, the principal quit.

- **Tinkering at the margin. A little change won't do it.** This is not a case in which if the schools were tuned up another 5 percent, everything would be all set. Society has changed, the world of work has changed, and schools have to change. The two battle cries of the status quo are "We're already doing it" and "It won't work here." The answers are "No, you're not" and "It will too."
- **A single change. There is no silver bullet.** School choice is an interesting and useful concept. It works in a number of places. Done properly, it can work across the country. But choice alone, which is often put forward as a silver bullet, will not do it. What is needed is a fundamental change. Schools must evolve from a bureaucratic, top-down, hierarchical system. School choice, alternative forms of teacher certification, no pass/no play, or any other useful policy, by itself, won't do it.

- **School-based management alone.** The state or the district cannot simply give power to the school unless it puts in place some system of accountability, some set of goals, and some set of incentives for reaching them. In other words, just saying that a school can manage its own affairs doesn't ensure it will be successful in getting students to learn more.
- **More and more narrow multiple-choice testing.** What you test is what you get. Multiple-choice testing's primary virtue is in the tracking of students. It's not useful in a diagnostic sense. What is needed is diagnostic and more fundamental testing that measures the students' ability to use their minds well.
- **Failure to build community support.** A failure to build community support is fatal. Unless the public presses for the same changes education reformers want, they won't occur. This means that those who want to change schools must be good at the public relations aspect of educational change as well. It also means avoiding a union-bashing approach. No one yet has accomplished any major school reform work without the unions being a party to it.

Here are 12 things that research has shown work:

1. **Most important by far: changing the school climate, the school mode, the school design — what today is called restructuring the schools.**

Schools must be redesigned so that students become active learners

The difficulty in talking about restructuring schools is that it is a complex concept. By restructuring schools, education leaders mean starting to think differently about how children learn and how teachers teach. Children learn far more — and they learn the skills and values they need in this changing world — when schools stop lining them up in rows and lecturing at them; when the process of learning is shared by teacher and student and by groups of students; when teachers know students personally; and when thinking is valued. When these elements are present, students will want to learn.

But this means the principal must be an academic leader, not solely an administrator. In fact, most principals occupy their lives with administrative duties. But the principal needs to be the person visibly in charge of designing, encouraging and developing how the school is going to look as a learning institution. Therefore, the principal must empower the teachers.

Teachers must become leaders and coaches

But to change the way students learn, schools must change. Teachers must be leaders. They must empower students. Students must be workers in the process of learning and do much of the thinking, discovering and researching. The job of the teacher is to coach. This takes a lot of self-confidence on the part of teachers.

The basic goal is to empower students. Teachers and principals need to know students, and to know them personally. This won't occur in classrooms in which teachers see 150 students a day. The size of schools and classrooms must be reduced. The total number of students that the teacher interacts with has to be reduced.

Creating this sort of climate is the first thing that works. New approaches to policy can help create the climate.

A leadership coalition is essential

3 Create a serious coalition. No priesthood ever reforms itself. Educators aren't the only ones who can't reform themselves; neither can the medical profession nor the legal profession. The community needs a coalition that is prepared to spend the next 10 years working on education problems. This coalition should include a number of different groups.

It must include business leaders. Why? Because the business community has the biggest single stake, other than the state government, in the effectiveness of the education system. The business community has awakened to the fact that it can't proceed without a well-educated work force. Business leaders have the clout to command attention and the staff to make things work.

It must include state government. Why? Because the state government makes the rules by which schools and school systems operate and puts up the most money.

It must include the unions. Why? Because the unions, unless they're party to the plan, are going to be fighting it every inch of the way. Where they are party to it, they have been constructive partners and have ownership.

It must include parents and community leaders. Why? Because parents, particularly the most active parents, will continue to preserve the status quo unless they understand why change is needed.

What is needed is a coherent group with sufficient funding, focused knowledge and leadership to take on these issues in a courteous but determined way. This includes asking "What are our goals? How do we know if we're meeting our goals? And what are you, in the educational system, going to do to meet these goals?"

High expectations must be set for every student

4. **Set high expectations.** Far too little is expected of American students. Until the expectations are changed, schools will get what they have now. One example is former Governor Richard Riley's leadership in South Carolina. He created regional meetings across the state and discussed and debated what the expectations should be. Once there was agreement about a set of expectations for every graduate, the state developed a program to measure performance against those expectations.

People work best when there are clear-cut goals. If the goals say every child should be able to do certain things, then there should be a way of intervening when it isn't happening. For example, there may be agreement that every child should be at grade level. Once the goal is set, it enables the community to come back to the schools and the district to ask "OK, how are we going to achieve this?"

Today a lot of students are not performing at grade level. In a very large city, it is not uncommon for 50 percent of the student body not to graduate. What's the response? "Well, it's a big city. What do you expect?" What is needed is schools that say "Here are the expectations. Every student is going to graduate. Students are all going to be at grade level. Now, how are we going to do it?"

We must test for higher-order skills

4. **Test for higher-order skills.** The process of assessing student performance must move away from simplistic testing toward testing higher-order skills. It can be done; it's already being done in many places.

Retraining of teachers and administrators must be ongoing

5. **Retrain both teachers and principals.** Change is not something that's going to happen without a lot of training. There are already examples; some school districts and even states are doing it now. Probably the most sophisticated is the school system in Pittsburgh. That city has spent eight years training and retraining its teachers and principals. And when you ask the superintendent, Dick Wallace, how far along they are, he answers, "About half way," and he adds, they may never get all the way there because it is a never-ending task.

But it's also essential to get enough teachers and administrators started in their training so that there will be a sufficient mass of people willing to try new ideas in order to achieve major restructuring.

Risk takers must be supported

6. **Support risk taking. One of the most important things the community can do is to support principals and superintendents who are prepared to take risks.** There is not a lot of support for risk taking in the educational community now. Remember, often two of the most conservative forces are parents and school boards. The school board often implies to the superintendent and principal that the most important thing is to avoid having problems. Don't let the school buses run late. Don't have a teacher say something harsh to a sensitive child. In other words, don't make waves. And yet, because of the need to reshape the way schools function, it's time for major risk taking. Who is going to support that innovative superintendent, principal or teacher?

Aim to change policy

7. **Press for policy changes.** The use of small competitive grants is one of the most effective ways of doing this. In Colorado, for example, Governor Romer has set up "Creativity Schools" with small grants ranging from $5,000 to $25,000. Any school or school district can apply. The committee says, "This is what we'd like to accomplish. We're not going to tell you how to do it, but this is what we'd like to accomplish. The best 25 proposals will get funded."

   Last year, 325 schools submitted proposals. This year, the estimate is that there will be about 500. **Many of the proposals that didn't get funded were implemented anyway, because the grant process itself became a vehicle for empowering innovative principals, teachers and boards who wanted to do something.** The tradition in education is that if someone tells the schools they have to change, they draw their swords. If schools know $25,000 in grants is available, but that obtaining some of it would require doing something innovative or changing the school, they say, "No kidding? Let's go!" Small grants are a vehicle for achieving change.

Early childhood intervention is an investment, not an expense

Early childhood education. There's no way to provide early-childhood education without added expense, but it does work. The two big issues in early-childhood education are the quality of the program (including the quality of the teachers) and its availability to those who need it most. This country is moving inexorably toward early childhood education — more than 40 percent of the 3- and 4-year-olds are now in preschool. Currently, most early childhood education in this country is being provided for students who need it the least because their families can afford it.

To help children at risk, mentor

Mentoring. Self-esteem is important, and the single fastest way to develop self-esteem is to mentor a child at risk. It would be easy for this country to find volunteers and mentor every child at risk. Mentoring helps not only the child being mentored and the mentor, but also the school. While the school is struggling to turn itself around, to restructure itself, we can make life easier for the school by giving it more interested and self-confident students to work with.

The evidence on mentoring is overwhelming; it works. It doesn't take a lot of money; it takes trained mentors, matching them to the students and supervising them.

When parents are involved, the student gains

Involve parents. The more bureaucratic a school, the less likely it is to involve parents in a meaningful way. But parents are a powerful factor in a child's learning — for good or ill. Many states, districts and individual schools have developed effective programs of reaching out to draw parents into the schooling process. Experience has shown that when the least involved, least well-educated parent or parents are drawn into the teaching/learning process, the child gains.

Focus on restructuring

11. **Press for restructuring and de-layering the state department of education.** Most businesses have been forced to cut the layers of supervision in the central operations and focus attention on support of the operating units. Education departments need to do the same to become better and more flexible sources of support for schools and less sources of control.

Teachers and administrators need to learn how to restructure

12. **In-service and training dollars should go toward learning how to restructure schools.** For example, there is money in most school budgets for retraining, but not much of it goes to retraining of the kind needed to help in restructuring the schools. These are reallocation problems. Reallocation problems are stubborn and difficult. That is why there is a need for a coalition of interested citizens who are prepared to become knowledgeable about system change, to ask tough questions and to make change happen.

Five principles for restructuring

1. All policy should start with the question "How does this improve student learning?"
2. The goal of restructuring is to improve learning for all students. Both equity and high standards must be achieved.
3. Teachers must actively engage students, promoting higher-order thinking, not just basic skills. Passively sitting in a classroom listening to a lecture will not prepare students for today's world.
4. The entire system — from schoolhouse to statehouse — must change.
5. Restructuring requires coherent policies all across the system, including those for curriculum, assessment, professional development and parental involvement.

What is needed is a system in which policy encourages school transformation. Policy should not only give more flexibility to the school, but it should also create a set of expectations, and a set of accountability measures, and should encourage the retraining of people. **Both the individual schools and the school system as a whole must be held accountable for performance, as must superintendents, principals and teachers.**

Almost nothing that has been mentioned, except early childhood education, requires major amounts of money. Retraining does take money, but it doesn't take massive amounts, and schools already spend money on in-service programs and training. The plain fact is that more money won't make people change. In fact, it's often the absence of money that makes people change.

What educators need to say is "Here is how we are going to change these schools. Now, at these critical junctures, we need some added funding. But first let us show you how we are going to change these things." If education does that, it will get the money it needs. This is a hard task for American education, but important and achievable.

Dr. Frank Newman accepted the appointment as president of the Education Commission of the States on January, 1985. He has a direct background in education administration, policy development and higher education. Prior to his appointment, he was a president fellow at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1983-1984) and President of the University of Rhode Island (1974-1983).

The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit, nationwide compact formed in 1965 to help governors, state legislators, state education officials and others develop policies to improve the quality of education. Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are members. Offices are in Denver and Washington, D.C.

The St. Louis Regional Educational Partnership is a group of corporate representatives, teacher union heads, school superintendants, deans of schools of education, and other parties interested in focusing on regional education. Its goals, based on students' being active learners, are to be achieved in part though leadership coalitions.